

Support South African public sector strike

A Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group Statement in support of South African public sector strike

The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group sends its greetings to COSATU and all the striking public sector unions and extends its solidarity to the public sector workers on strike against the Government's sub-inflation wage offer. By standing resolutely against the ANC Government, the public sector workers are a beacon for the labour movement, not just in South Africa, but throughout the world. Their struggle is our struggle. Their victory will be our victory. Their defeat will be our defeat.

The MACG are incensed at the Government's refusal to grant the workers' demands, which are in themselves far less than they deserve. In the first place, the Government offer of a 6% wage rise is less than the 7% inflation rate, meaning the Government is insisting that workers take a pay cut. This is unacceptable in any circumstances. Even the revised 7.25% offer is likely to result in many workers having reduced living standards. In addition, we urge the public sector workers to reject any assertion that "there is no more money". While the Randlords continue (despite the abolition of Apartheid) to live in the lap of luxury and the new ANC elite ride the gravy train, there can be no argument that there are insufficient resources to pay public sector workers a living wage. And while the Government has, under pressure of the current dispute, officially rejected the massive pay rises recommended by the Moseneke Commission, it cannot be trusted to apply to itself after the strike the same sacrifices it is demanding public sector workers take now.

We are further outraged by the Government's tactics in the dispute. Its duplicity in pretending to negotiate for four months, while its supposed "representative" had no mandate, leaves it condemned. The four Cabinet ministers concerned have lost all credibility and, if any of them say that the Sun rises in the East, we would recommend getting up early to confirm it. More fundamentally, the use of the Army, both as s**bs to do struck work and as thugs to break picket lines, is a stark demonstration of just which side of the class line the Government is on. We endorse the right of picketing workers to use reasonable force in self-defence and denounce the Government for its hypocrisy on the question. If they are opposed to violence during strikes, let them first withdraw their military thugs!

The fact that, even now, the public sector strike is not resolved is a demonstration of the fundamental conflict of interests between labour and capital. Regardless of the outcome of this strike, while society is divided into a working class and an employing class, there can be no just and lasting settlement to employment disputes. A victory for the public sector workers now would result in the capitalists, at some future time, attacking them or other workers with increased vigour to recover that they have lost. A defeat for the public sector workers would embolden the capitalists to attack them again and to attack

other sectors of workers as well so as to entrench their wealth and power. While capitalism continues, the cycle will not end.

Finally, the MACG urges all workers in South African to reflect deeply on the role of the South African so-called “Communist” Party. Communism has not failed. Rather, the SACP has failed communism. Under Apartheid, the SACP taught that the workers’ struggle had two stages. The first stage was the struggle for the establishment of democracy, for the abolition of Apartheid and entrenched racial oppression. The second stage, to follow at some point after the establishment of democracy, was the struggle for socialism. To the extent that this was true, they deceived the workers (and many of their own members) by omitting to tell them that in the second stage of the struggle, the SACP would be on the side of the capitalists! The wretched history since 1994 of this once-proud organisation can only be understood as the penalty for its fundamental political errors. The liberation of the working class is the task of the working class itself and cannot be delegated to a political party.

Victory to the South African public sector workers! Workers of the world, unite!

In Solidarity,

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group